

AN OLD-TIME FOURTH

HOW OUR FOREFATHERS CELEBRATED THE DAY.

There Was Less Noise than Now, but More Feasting and Dancing—Two Typical Celebrations in the Early Part of the Century.

Orated and Feasted.
Our forefathers of three generations ago had a much more pleasant method of celebrating the glorious Fourth than the advanced method of today, with his hysterical vortex of booming, snapping, thundering, cracking and crashing sounds. Contrasted with the violent celebration of this up-to-date age, the Fourth of July of fifty or 100 years ago presents a peaceful picture of happy patriotism more in keeping with the real sentiment of the event than the present blustering fashion. For instance, here is the way the people of Germantown, Pa., celebrated the Fourth of July of 1818. There were three cannons in the little town which had done service both in the Revolution and in the War of 1812. Several days before the Fourth the ladies of the place boiled hams, roasted sucking pigs whole, baked pies by the dozen and biscuits by the hundred, made all manner of cake generously filled with jam, and on the morning of the great day deposited the good things with the proprietor of the best tavern in town. Early on the Fourth the young men of the place fired off the cannons two or three times, as official notice that the



ORATOR OF THE DAY.

Fourth of July had come again. At the noon hour the whole community met at the green beside the heaped up tables. There were speeches and a prayer, and then the work of the day began. Benches were placed on all sides of the tables, and the eaters sat as closely as possible.

None of the ladies dined with the men. It was not considered proper. They stood in groups near the tavern, gowned in their best and making polite comments on the diners. In the late afternoon, when all the men had eaten their fill, there was a ball in the public house, and it was here that the ladies really enjoyed the day. They danced right merrily until well on toward midnight, when the candles, the musicians and the dancers were all exhausted.

In the 30's there was a change in the method of celebrating the Fourth. The country was more prosperous, and its patriotism had taken a more valiant turn. The town of Newburgh-on-the-Hudson gave a great Fourth of July celebration in the year 1831.

The ladies began the work weeks before the Fourth. Committees were appointed, and each member was to call upon a certain number of her friends for contributions. Powder was purchased by an ambitious politician, and the village cannon was shot off at regular intervals during the morning of the Fourth. He also gave small change to the boys of the town, and this was used to buy peppermint candy and gingerbread. Firecrackers were very expensive things then, and few boys dared to indulge in the luxury of using them, even if they had the financial means.

From early sunrise, young ladies and young men were busy making and setting the rude tables, also a place for the orator of the day. The latter had been invited from a neighboring town because of his wide reputation for eloquence. He was a young man, who wore his hair long, and in ordinary conversation used nothing but the most ponderous language. He was regarded as one of the coming men of the day by the community and himself.

At midday the people gathered at the church for the grand procession. A band composed of young men of the village led the way, followed by the three most equipped regiments to be had, in which sat the aged Revolutionary heroes. The 1812 veterans marched next, and then came all kinds of vehicles, from the heavy farm wagon to the light buggy, containing the children and the very old folks. The organ of the day, of course, took as its theme patriotism and the great and growing country. Here is an example of his style. It refers to the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

"Behold these ironhearted men armed with denture case, and encased in a panoply that no human force could shatter, and in readiness for battle, stalk boldly forward, and with one stroke of the pen cause a vibration that shall only cease to be felt when the universe returns to primordial chaos."

This was considered magnificent, and the 1812 veterans gave their strain for three quarters of an hour in this strain was deemed the hero of the day. After the design of Kingpinthe joints of beef and other delicacies were attacked, and it was dark when the feast was over. Back in the village at night there were fireworks, which were considered magnificent, but which would be sneered at by the average small boy of today.

Outdoor Exercise.
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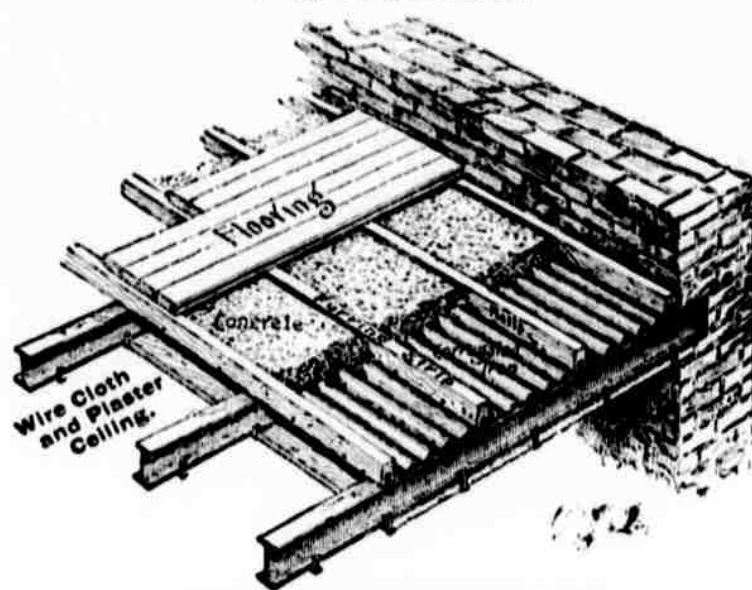
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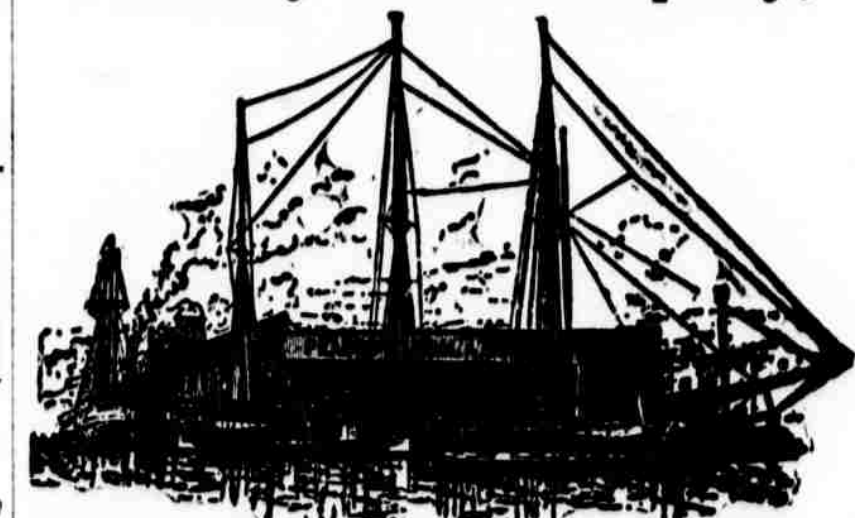
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